

# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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In Reply To:

1112P

April 25, 2003

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Instruction Memorandum No. MT-060-03-002

Expires: 09/30/2004

To: Lewistown Field Office Personnel

From: Field Manager, Lewistown

Subject: River Safety and DOI Boat Operator Requirements

As the result of a river related boating incident during the 2001 field season, I would like to re-enforce current Department of Interior (DOI) boating policy and establish specific policy for all Lewistown Field Office (LFO) employees involved with use of any type of watercraft. Additional policy, procedure, and training requirements may be developed in the future to supplement this IM.

### Current DOI Policy:

1. Operators of Departmental motorized watercraft shall be adequately trained and properly tested and certified prior to operation of any Departmental watercraft. Operators of any motorboat will successfully complete the Motorboat Operator Certification Course (MOCC) training requirements. Certification will be valid for 5 years. Prior to re-certification, operators will complete an 8-hour refresher course.
2. On Class A and Class 1 vessels (all LFO watercraft fall into this category) all persons on-board must wear an approved personal floatation device (PFD).
3. PFD's, used on any type of craft, will be international orange in color and equipped with retro-reflective tape in accordance with 46 CFR 25.25 – 15

### Specific LFO Boat Operator Safety Policy:

1. A DOI non-motorized watercraft certification is being developed and will be implemented in the near future. At this time river seasonals receive a scaled down version of the motorized watercraft certification course prior to operating canoes or motorized canoes. Currently there are no requirements for all other LFO personnel regarding non-motorized craft.

2. There will be minimum of two people in a motorized watercraft while it is being operated. Exceptions apply only when loading or unloading a motorboat, or for Law Enforcement needs or when operating a PWC. Exceptions also apply for motorized canoes. However, a motorized canoe operator will not function in a solo capacity. Another operator in another canoe must be present.
3. A PFD will be worn at all times, be completely zipped or buckled, and be fitted properly when operating or riding in any watercraft. In addition a PFD will be worn when wading or anytime a person is physically entering a body of water. A PFD will also be worn when launching or trailering a boat, and will be worn by all passengers standing on docks or preparing to board a watercraft.
4. Operators and passengers will wear their PFD while departing from a boat, and will remove it only after reaching a point on shore where they are a safe and reasonable distance from the water. PFD's will not be taken off prior to departing the boat, and will be worn prior to re-entering the boat. When operators or passengers are on shore and PFD's have been removed, PFD's should be secured to a solid object (if available) prior to leaving the shore and moving inland. A PFD should not be left in a boat, secured to the boat, or secured to the bowline if any part of the boat's hull remains in contact with the water.
5. All watercraft will be firmly secured using a combination bowline, stern-line, starboard or port lines, or some combination of the four any time the boat is left unattended in the water. This includes shoreline docking as well as boat ramp docking. All LFO motorized and non-motorized watercraft will carry a "docking pin" to which the boat can be secured. Boat operators should use good judgment when selecting a site to land the boat on a shoreline. If trees are not available to secure the boat the "docking pin" should be utilized.
6. A checklist has been developed for motorized and non-motorized craft. The boat operator prior to launching any type of watercraft will review the checklist. All mandatory equipment on the checklist must be on the craft before launching. The operator is responsible to ensure passengers are briefed on all boating safety requirements.
7. Having a functional radio on board is a checklist item. Boat operators will not launch and operate a boat if a functional radio is not on board. Radios should be inspected prior to launch to ensure good working condition, and should be properly programmed for specific repeaters in the area of boat operation. It is the responsibility of the operator to be knowledgeable of radio equipment and communication systems prior to launch. It is also highly recommended that operators check-out a satellite phone and have it available on the boat during their trip.
8. A mandatory inspection of the boat and trailer will occur prior to launching a motorized boat. Logs will be provided for each motorized boat and the inspection form will be completed and entered in the log prior to launching. The inspection will require pre-launch and post-use maintenance information. A trip "Purpose and Safety" briefing will be given to all people in the boating party by the trip leader or the designated lead boat operator prior to launch.

9. Job Hazard Analysis (JHA's) and Risk Management Worksheets for river related and boating related tasks will be completed and will be included with MSDS printouts as part of the log for each watercraft.
10. All motorized boat operators in the LFO will participate in a yearly boat operation refresher course (to be held at a river location), and complete an Internet boating refresher course prior to operating a boat. The refresher course can be taken via the Internet at the following address: <http://www.boatus.com/onlinecourse/default.htm>. The internet course should be taken between January 1 and April 1 (or prior to the field season) each year. A dated printout certifying the course has been completed must be submitted to one of the individuals listed below in item number eleven.
11. Wade Brown, Sandra Padilla, and (vice-Schultz) have been designated as being responsible for watercraft safety and certification for the LFO. These individuals will help coordinate the yearly training exercise and serve as a program point of contact for the LFO.

Specific Lewistown Boat Operation Policy:

BLM boat operators have a responsibility to operate boats in a safe and prudent manner and also be cognizant and considerate of the many non-motorized customers using the river. Many of our customers come to the Upper Missouri expecting a non-motorized experience or at a minimum to see motorized craft traveling downstream at a no-wake speed. To minimize impacts on non-motorized users the following policy will be adhered to by all BLM boat operators:

Watch carefully for approaching boats or boats you may be overtaking. Remember motorized boats must yield to sailboats and boats being rowed or paddled. When overtaking a canoe or group of canoes take the boat off plane speed at least 200 yards before reaching the canoe or canoes. Always proceed at a no-wake speed around or through the canoes depending on water level and operating conditions until you are at least 200 yards beyond the craft, then return to a plane speed. Never maintain plane speed and attempt to go on the opposite side of the river to pass canoes.

The same process should be used when approaching or passing a developed camp area such as Slaughter River, Hole-in-the-Wall, or Eagle Creek. Take the boat off of plane speed, proceed past the camp area at a no-wake speed and then return to plane speed after leaving the boundaries of the area.

On busy days this can mean a slow trip up or down the river. However, please keep in mind many of our customers have planned their Missouri River trip for years, and many have traveled long distances to float the river. They do not expect to see or hear power boats operating at plane speed and when they do it can severely impact their trip. We need to do our best to minimize the administrative impact BLM boats have on the non-motorized public.

Signed by: Michael P. Stewart, Acting Field Manager

Authenticated by: Linda Birdwell (MT060)

1 Attachment

[1-Lewistown Field Office Mandatory Safety Equipment for all Watercraft](#)